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AUTHOR Budke, Wesley E.
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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the 796 vocational education program improvement projects conducted during FY 1980 under the Education Amendments of 1976 (P. L. 94-485) with respect to location, funding levels, funding recipients, educational levels, problem areas, and outcomes. Projects reported include research, innovative and exemplary programs, and curriculum development activities. Data contained in six tables provide information on (1) state program improvement projects by state; (2) state program improvement projects by legislative section; (3) recipients of project funding; (4) target educational levels; (5) problem areas addressed by projects; and (6) products and outcomes of projects. Appended is a table of quantity and funding amount of projects by state and legislative section. The data for this report were compiled from descriptive abstracts provided by state research coordinating units and contained in the ERIC database. (LRA)

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

A Summary of State-Administered Projects in FY 1980

Prepared by

Wesley E. Budke

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210

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FOREWORD

Provisions were made in the Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) for state-administered program improvement projects. During the 1980 fiscal year, 796 research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development projects were conducted under this legislative provision. Information about these projects have been reported with respect to location, funding levels, funding recipients, educational levels, problem areas, and outcomes. This summary report will be helpful to legislators, federal program administrators, and state agency personnel by providing answers to questions such as:

- o How many projects were conducted and how much money was obligated?
- o How do states compare in the number and kind of projects conducted and the amount of funds obligated?
- o Are projects addressing critical problems and issues?
- o What is the relative emphasis on target audiences and problem areas?
- o What kinds of agencies and organizations are conducting the work?

We are pleased to disseminate this summary of state program improvement projects so that it might be used for program planning and policy development.

We wish to thank the staff members of the state research coordinating units for this cooperation in submitting project descriptions.

Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for
Research in Vocational Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This analysis of 1980 state-administered program improvement projects provides information about where projects were conducted, by whom, for what purpose, and with what result. A total of $21,892,748 was obligated to conduct 796 projects, ranging from zero to 89 per state. The average funding for projects was $27,503 which remained consistent across research, exemplary, and curriculum development projects. Eighty-three percent of the funding was for projects conducted by educational agencies of which four-year colleges and universities received over 40 percent. Nearly half of the activity addresses some aspect of postsecondary education. About 74 percent of the projects addressed problems relevant to federal administrative and legislative priorities. Curriculum and instructional products resulted from over 40 percent of the projects.

INTRODUCTION

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 (P.L. 88-210) was the landmark legislation for vocational education program improvement because it contained broad provisions for research, training, experimental, and demonstration or pilot programs. Funding authorized under the legislation was appropriated by Congress and allocated by the Commissioner for institutional capacity building and for such priorities as program evaluation, resource development, vocational guidance and career choice, organization and administration, and new careers. The subsequent Vocational Education Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-576) authorized support of grants for research, training, exemplary programs, and curriculum development. Part of the research and exemplary programs was to be administered at the state level.

An assessment by the Committee for Vocational Education Research and Development (COVERD, 1976) was highly critical of the vocational education research and development program because of its apparent lack of impact due to shifting research priorities, geographic restriction on distribution of R&D funds, lack of coordination between parts, inadequate dissemination and utilization, failure to examine impact, and slow startup. COVERD faulted vocational education R&D for not focusing on the larger philosophical and policy issues during the previous 10-year period. Other studies by Rand and Development Associates raised concerns about other aspects of the R&D program.

The Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) responded to many of the concerns raised about vocational R&D. It provided for Programs of National Significance to be administered at the federal level and for Program Improvement and Support Services to be administered at the state level. The act encouraged consolidation of programs, better management, and accountability. The Rules and Regulations for the act required the state research coordinating units to submit abstracts of contracted program improvement projects to The National Center for Research in Vocational Education and to submit reports and products resulting from the projects within 90 days of completion of the project. The National Center, through its Clearinghouse, publishes abstracts of program improvement projects in Resources in Vocational Education bimonthly and in Current Projects in Vocational Education annually, as well as maintains the information in its files for review and analysis.

This database of state program improvement project descriptions can be helpful to practitioners, researchers, administrators, and policy makers. Analysis of information in the database can provide answers to many program development and policy-making questions.

This is the second analysis of the database, the first reported on FY 1978 and 1979 projects and is available through the ERIC system (CE 027 025 to be announced in the March or April 1981 issue of RIE). It provides summary data about projects conducted in the states and their focus. It provides information about where projects were conducted, by whom, for what purpose, and with what results. This report does not deal with qualitative and programmatic dimensions of state program improvement projects, nor with impact. These dimensions need further investigation which can be facilitated by the database.

METHODOLOGY

The database of state-administered program improvement projects has been compiled from descriptive abstracts provided by state research coordinating units. The abstracts served as the data source for the review and analysis conducted by the Clearinghouse staff. The basic steps taken by the staff are described below:

1. Abstracts were reviewed by Clearinghouse staff to make sure that all bibliographic and funding information was complete. If some information was missing, states were asked to supply it.

2. Lists of projects were compiled and sent to research coordinating unit directors for verification.

3. Key variables were edited and indexed in the ERIC format.

4. Key variables were coded for computer analysis (i.e., state, fiscal year, legislative section number, project beginning and ending dates, amount of funding, recipient institution, legislative and federal priorities addressed, educational level, target population, vocational service area, and products or outcomes).

5. Data were sorted and tabulated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

6. Data were aggregated for display in the six tables in the Findings section.

7. Data in the tables were described and analyzed for conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

The methodology used can be replicated in subsequent years as more data become available.

FINDINGS

The findings reported in this section are based upon data drawn from program improvement project abstracts supplied by state research coordinating units. It is believed that the data is relatively complete (i.e., in excess of 95 percent) because lists of these project abstracts were verified as complete by research coordinating units who administer the program improvement activities. The data listed below were chosen for attention in this report:

1. State program improvement projects by state in Table I.

2. State program improvement projects by legislative section i. Table II.

3. Recipients of project funding in Table III.

4. Target educational levels in Table IV.

5. Problem areas addressed by projects in Table V.

6. Products and outcomes of projects in Table VI.

The number and funding amounts of projects are displayed by state and legislative section in Appendix A.

Table I shows the number of vocational education program improvement projects and Federal funds obligated for projects in each of the states and territories under provisions of Sections 131, 132, and 133 of P.L. 94-482 during FY 1978 and 1979.

1. For FY 1980, states and territories reported 796 program improvement projects for which $21,892,748 was obligated.

2. The number of program improvement projects ranged from zero in six states to 88 in Pennsylvania.

3. Obligations for program improvement ranged from zero in six states to $3,182,242 in Texas.

4. The average funding for projects was $27,503, with a range of $3,000 in Delaware to $179,970 in Mississippi.

TABLE I
FY 1980 STATE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
BY STATE

State or Territory	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
Alabama	3	35,004
Alaska	2	103,200
Arizona	9	128,494
Arkansas	16	271,409
California	21	812,675
Colorado	8	111,320
Connecticut	21	513,796
Delaware	2	6,000
District of Columbia	-	-
Florida	23	794,810
Georgia	27	627,212
Hawaii	-	-
Idaho	5	49,783
Illinois	73	2,757,910
Indiana	42	740,323
Iowa	3	60,778
Kansas	23	214,088
Kentucky	15	306,357
Louisiana	9	152,539
Maine	1	28,000
Maryland	15	441,754
Massachusetts	-	-
Michigan	6	293,935
Minnesota	29	235,839
Mississippi	3	539,911
Missouri	8	378,820
Montana	11	138,887
Nebraska	8	92,275
Nevada	10	198,345
New Hampshire	2	20,000
New Jersey	36	548,385
New Mexico	-	-
New York	45	2,315,041
North Carolina	6	135,352
North Dakota	14	85,622

TABLE I. continued

State or Territory	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
Ohio	26	1,175,000
Oklahoma	18	280,203
Oregon	5	74,802
Pennsylvania	88	1,455,227
Rhode Island	-	-
South Carolina	9	58,750
South Dakota	18	150,312
Tennessee	23	1,082,354
Texas	56	3,182,242
Utah	1	20,000
Vermont	1	17,000
Virginia	16	601,513
Washington	8	74,103
West Virginia	15	200,110
Wisconsin	14	261,407
Wyoming	-	-
Guam	2	21,861
Puerto Rico	-	-
TOTALS	796	21,892,748

Table II shows the distribution of projects and funds obligated across the program improvement sections (i.e., research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development).

1. There was greater variation in the amount of funding among sections in FY 1980 than the previous two years; however, several states still chose to fund projects under only one or two of the three sections (Appendix A).

2. The 265 projects conducted under Section 131 (research) were funded at an average of $27,674.

3. The 230 projects conducted under Section 132 (innovative and exemplary) were funded at an average of $26,929.

4. The 301 projects conducted under Section 133 (curriculum development) were funded at an average of $27,792.

5. The average funding for state projects within each of the sections (Appendix A) was extremely variable --
   - research projects ranged from $1,500 to $90,391
   - innovative and exemplary projects ranged from $2,159 to $52,000
   - curriculum development projects ranged from $4,593 to $359,128

TABLE II
FY 1980 STATE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS
BY LEGISLATIVE SECTION

Legislative Section under Subpart 3 PL 94-482	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds
Section 131, Research	265	7,333,695
Section 132, Innovative and Exemplary	230	6,193,739
Section 133, Curriculum Development	301	8,365,314
TOTAL	796	21,892,748

Table III shows the recipients of project funding in several categories. All funding amounts by category are rounded. Percentages shown are for the amount of funds, not for projects.

1. Over 83 percent of the funding was for projects conducted by educational agencies. Four-year colleges and universities conducted 40.3 percent of the projects, followed by local educational agencies (24.1 percent), two-year colleges (8.9 percent) and state education agencies (2.2 percent).

2. Non-educational agencies (i.e., research centers, private businesses, and professional associations) conducted projects which were supported with 13.5 percent of the funds.

Table III
RECIPIENTS OF PROJECT FUNDING

Institution or Agency	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds	Percent of Funding
4-Year College/University	283	8,831,128	40.3
Local Education Agency	254	5,277,932	24.1
Research Center	74	2,769,595	12.6
2-Year College (Jr. College/ Technical School/Community College)	73	1,945,057	8.9
Intermediate Education Agency	39	1,664,504	7.6
Other	23	561,279	2.6
State Education Agency	37	488,263	2.2
None/Information Not Available	8	175,242	0.8
Private Business	3	123,763	0.6
Professional Association	2	55,985	0.3
TOTALS	796	21,892,748	100.0

Table IV provides information on the number of projects and funding directed toward target educational levels or combinations of educational levels.

1. The focus of 49.1 percent of the program improvement projects was upon secondary and postsecondary or postsecondary and adult educational levels.

2. The focus of 39.3 percent of the work was upon less-than-postsecondary education levels (i.e., elementary, elementary and secondary, and secondary).

3. Focus on educational levels was not applicable in 75 (11.6 percent) of the projects.

TABLE IV
TARGET EDUCATION LEVELS

Educational Level	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds	Percent of Funding
Secondary and Postsecondary (10-14)	257	7,448,580	34.0
Secondary (7-12)	286	6,976,451	31.9
Postsecondary and Adult (13-Adult)	141	3,294,606	15.1
Information Not Available	75	2,534,027	11.6
Elementary and Secondary (K-12)	35	1,608,485	7.3
Elementary (K-6)	2	30,599	0.1
TOTALS	796	21,892,748	100.0

Table V shows the problem areas addressed by the state-administered vocational education program improvement projects funded during FY 1978 and 1979. The "Information Not Available" category is quite large because products such as technical reports and monographs, management and policy information, and consortiums and networks were not directed at such levels.

1. About 74 percent of the projects addressed problems relevant to federal administrative and legislative priorities.

2. The largest percentage (35.6 percent) was in the area of curriculum (i.e., management, development).

3. A large percentage (12.1 percent) of projects was related to special needs populations (i.e., handicapped, gifted, disadvantaged).

4. Planning, data, and accountability projects accounted for 8.8 percent of the funding.

TABLE V
PROBLEM AREAS ADDRESSED BY PROJECTS

Problem Area	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds	Percent of Funding
Curriculum Management/Curriculum Development Procedures	287	7,784,581	35.6
None/Information Not Available	199	5,731,972	26.2
Special Needs (Handicapped, Gifted, Disadvantaged)	81	2,650,847	12.1
Planning, Data & Accountability	66	1,921,000	8.8
Equity/Civil Rights	31	924,477	4.2
Guidance for Careers/Vocations	23	571,104	2.6
Other Federal Priority	28	518,695	2.4
Administration of State/Local Vocational Education Agencies	27	481,872	2.2
Basic Skills	14	443,525	2.0
Urban/Rural/Youth	11	337,412	1.5
Education to Work Transition	17	310,752	1.4
Availability/Accessibility to Adults	12	216,511	1.0
TOTALS	796	21,892,748	100.0

Table VI shows the nature of products and outcomes of the 796 vocational education program improvement projects administered by the states in FY 1980.

1. Curriculum and instructional products resulted from 306 or 40.3 percent of the projects.

2. Personnel training was the outcome of 124 or 18.0 percent of the projects.

3. Evaluation and assessment was the outcome or product of 118 projects (12.9 percent).

4. These three categories of products and outcomes promise to impact directly on programs and constitute 71.2 percent of the state-administered program improvement investment.

TABLE VI
PRODUCTS AND OUTCOMES OF PROJECTS

Primary Product/Outcome	Number of Projects	Obligated Funds	Percent of Funding
Curriculum and Instructional Products	306	8,818,426	40.3
Personnel Training (Inservice)	124	3,937,804	18.0
Evaluation and Assessment	118	2,834,017	12.9
Technical Reports and Monographs	122	2,622,770	12.0
Program Models and Feasibility Studies	61	1,341,480	6.1
Personnel Counseling	28	741,817	3.4
Management and Policy Information	12	665,932	3.0
Placement	17	597,278	2.7
Other	4	294,874	1.2
Consortiums and Networks	4	38,350	0.4
TOTALS	796	21,892,748	100.0

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions about the state program improvement effort can be drawn from the information collected and organized by the Clearinghouse for FY 1980.

1. The reporting system is working. Information is flowing from the state research coordinating units to the National Center Clearinghouse on a regular basis. States have assured the Clearinghouse staff that all projects under Sections 131, 132 and 133 have been reported.

2. More funds are being obligated for support services than for program improvement. State program improvement projects funded under Sections 131, 132 and 133 represent $21,892,748 or 19.5 percent of the total amount allocated to the states for program improvement and support services. It is surmised that the remaining 80.5 percent is being obligated for the support services specified in Sections 134, 135 and 136, and possibly for the administration of the state research coordinating units when this is not reported as a project. States vary in the proportion of funds they devoted to program improvement.

3. There was greater variation in the amount of funding applied to research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development products than in the previous two years. Individual states, however, are extremely variable in this respect, some choosing to fund no projects in certain categories.

4. The amount obligated for each project is extremely variable. There is a wide range in project size within and between states. The average funding per project is $27,503.

5. States are being responsive to federal priorities. About 74 percent of the state program improvement projects were conducted in problem areas related to federal administrative and legislative priorities.

6. State program improvement projects have focused on every educational level. Over 49 percent of the state program improvement obligations have been at postsecondary, adult and combined secondary-postsecondary levels. Other projects have focused on levels from kindergarten to grade 12.

7. State program improvement projects are being conducted by educational agencies and institutions at every level. Only 16.9 percent of the state program improvement funds go to projects done by other than educational agencies. The largest share of the work is being done by four-year colleges and universities (40.3 pecent), local educational agencies (24.1 percent), and two-year colleges (8.9 percent.)

8. The greatest number of projects have focused directly on improvement of instruction (i.e., curriculum and instruction projects, 306; personnel training, 124; and evaluation and assessment, 118).

9. The level of funding and the type of program improvement activities have changed very little since 1978. State program improvement projects funded under Sections 131, 132, and 133 represent 19.5 percent of the total program improvement and support service allocation compared to 17.5 percent in previous years. Curriculum and instructional materials continue to be the most common product or outcome.

Quality, redundancy, and programmatic aspects of state program improvement projects have not yet been examined. Also, there is need to examine how states are setting program improvement priorities, incorporating these into comprehensive state plans, and following through with appropriate sequences of research, curriculum development, demonstration, personnel development, and statewide implementation.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications which can be drawn from the conclusions have bearing on R&D policy development at federal and state levels, on decision making related to R&D operations at both levels, and on practices at every level. The recommendations which spring from the implications suggest new or adjusted policies, procedures, and practices.

Implications

1. The reporting system, while working could be more efficient and effective. Not all projects nor all data elements for projects have been reported. Further, it has taken repeated urging before some states responded with submission of project abstracts.

2. Little is known about support services and administrative activities funded under P.L. 94-482. Currently, states are not required to submit information about guidance, personnel development, or sex equity activities funded under Sections 134, 135, and 136. This represents approximately 80.5 percent of all discretionary program improvement and support service activities in the states.

3. States report program improvement activities in three categories (i.e., research, innovative and exemplary, and curriculum development), but there is little difference in the design of some of the projects assigned to different categories. Examination of project abstracts reveals that there is an uncertain mix of activities funded under each of the categories. State personnel may regard integrity of the categories as unimportant or may be funding the proposals received in each cateogry regardless of methodology because there are no other options.

4. States have different strategies for program improvement as manifested in different funding patterns and levels. The size of projects and the proportion of projects in each category vary considerably by state. It is apparent that many states have encouraged different patterns and levels.

5. Independent funding decisions by states about projects on nationally significant problems may be increasing the chance of viable solutions through diversity; on the other hand, these independent decisions may be decreasing the chance of programmatic approaches and increasing unplanned duplication.

Recommendations

1. The responsibility of state research coordinating units to supply information about program improvement projects should be further clarified and reinforced. The legislation and administrative regulations regarding submittal of project information should be explicit. Responsibility for enforcement of these regulations should be assumed by the Federal agency through information, training, and sanctions (if necessary).

2. Training should be provided to research coordinating unit personnel to improve their ability to organize, prepare and submit accurate project information.

3. The project information (i.e., tracking) system should be expanded to accommodate information about support service and administrative activities in the states. At the present only 19.5 percent of the program improvement and support service activity is reported.

4. A study of the results (i.e., project outcomes and products) of various funding patterns and levels would be useful. While some states undoubtedly seek specific outcomes via certain patterns and levels, others may be less rational.

5. The planning of multi-state, multi-year cooperative R&D effort on nationally significant problems should be encouraged. The initial planning undertaken in late 1979 exemplifies this recommendation.

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APPENDIX A

FY 1980 State Administered

Program Improvement Projects

FY 1980 STATE ADMINISTERED PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

STATE	Sec. 131 (Research)		Sec. 132 (Exemplary)		Sec. 133 (Curriculum)		TOTALS	
	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount	No. of Projects	Amount
Alabama	-	-	2	24,004	1	11,000	3	35,004
Alaska	-	-	-	-	2	103,200	2	103,200
Arizona	2	35,000	2	38,494	5	55,000	9	128,494
Arkansas	9	175,883	7	95,526	-	-	16	271,409
California	7	387,938	1	52,000	13	372,737	21	812,675
Colorado	5	67,602	3	43,718	-	-	8	111,320
Connecticut	9	169,453	9	228,143	3	116,200	21	513,796
Delaware	2	6,000	-	-	-	-	2	6,000
District of Columbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Florida	12	387,240	10	283,570	1	124,000	23	794,810
Georgia	10	230,837	-	-	17	396,375	27	627,212
Hawaii	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Idaho	3	19,000	2	30,783	-	-	5	49,783
Illinois	41	1,519,763	16	722,764	16	515,383	73	2,757,910
Indiana	17	360,230	2	48,125	23	331,968	42	740,323
Iowa	1	37,774	-	-	2	23,004	3	60,778
Kansas	7	47,998	2	36,677	14	129,413	23	214,088
Kentucky	5	87,020	10	219,337	-	-	15	306,357
Louisiana	2	39,147	4	57,982	3	55,410	9	152,539
Maine	-	-	1	28,000	-	-	1	28,000
Maryland	2	14,500	1	30,355	12	396,899	15	441,754
Massachusetts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Michigan	2	93,100	-	-	4	200,835	6	293,935
Minnesota	4	221,009	-	-	25	114,830	29	335,839
Mississippi	2	180,783	-	-	1	359,128	3	539,911

FY 1980 STATE ADMINISTERED PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

STATE	Sec. 131 (Research) No. of Projects	Sec. 131 (Research) Amount	Sec. 132 (Exemplary) No. of Projects	Sec. 132 (Exemplary) Amount	Sec. 133 (Curriculum) No. of Projects	Sec. 133 (Curriculum) Amount	TOTALS No. of Projects	TOTALS Amount
Missouri	5	144,130	1	35,000	2	199,690	8	378,820
Montana	4	33,823	2	80,558	5	24,506	11	138,887
Nebraska	4	36,969	-	-	4	55,306	8	92,275
Nevada	-	-	10	198,345	-	-	10	198,345
New Hampshire	-	-	2	20,000	-	-	2	20,000
New Jersey	5	108,745	17	293,514	14	146,126	36	548,385
New Mexico	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
New York	27	1,388,958	1	8,930	17	917,153	45	2,315,041
North Carolina	6	135,352	-	-	-	-	6	135,352
North Dakota	1	3,000	6	31,292	7	51,330	14	85,622
Ohio	-	-	26	1,175,000	-	-	26	1,175,000
Oklahoma	4	33,300	3	44,903	11	202,000	18	280,203
Oregon	4	54,802	1	20,000	-	-	5	74,802
Pennsylvania	24	351,064	24	462,783	40	641,380	88	1,455,227
Rhode Island	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
South Carolina	9	58,750	-	-	-	-	9	58,750
South Dakota	3	21,475	7	84,688	8	44,149	18	150,312
Tennessee	3	48,463	14	402,397	6	631,494	23	1,082,354
Texas	12	521,630	34	1,227,697	10	1,432,915	1	3,182,242
Utah	-	-	1	20,000	-	-	1	20,000
Vermont	-	-	1	17,000	-	-	1	17,000
Virginia	4	206,733	2	66,752	10	328,028	16	601,513
Washington	2	3,000	1	11,775	5	59,328	8	74,103
West Virginia	1	18,000	-	-	14	182,110	15	200,110
Wisconsin	5	85,224	4	51,468	5	124,715	14	261,407
Wyoming	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Guam	-	-	1	2,159	1	19,702	2	21,861
Puerto Rico	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTALS	265	7,333,695	230	6,193,739	301	8,365,314	796	21,892,748